

Message Text

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SUBJ: PROPOSED S&T BILATERAL AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

REF: A. STATE 137389 B. TEHRAN 5321

1. SUMMARY: A BILATERAL AGREEMENT IN S&T BETWEEN THE US AND IRAN IS NOT RECOMMENDED AT THIS TIME. END SUMMARY.

2. DR HENRY BIRNBAUM OF THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION VISITED TEHRAN JULY 1-2 FOR THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSING POSSIBILITIES FOR A BILATERAL AGREEMENT IN S&T WITH IRAN. DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD WITH THE DCM AND THE SCIATT AND LATER THE SCIATT ACCOMPANIED DR BIRNBAUM ON A THREE-HOUR CALL ON DR BAHMAN PARSA, UNDERSECRETARY FOR SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION.

3. FOLLOWING A PRESENTATION BY DR BIRNBAUM OF THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY WITHIN THE UNITED STATES, DR PARSA DESCRIBED THE ROLE OF THE GOI IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN IRAN. THE DISCUSSION THEN TURNED TO VEHICLES FOR INTERACTION BETWEEN AMERICAN AND IRANIAN SCIENTISTS AND WAYS IN WHICH THE TWO GOVERNMENTS COULD PROMOTE SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION.

4. IRAN IS AT AN EARLY STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENTIFIC
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RESEARCH. ALTHOUGH DR PARSA ALLUDED TO POCKETS OF FIRST-CLASS

WORK IN PHARMACOLOGY AND PROTEINS, HE STATED QUITE FRANKLY THAT HE THOUGHT THERE WERE FEW FIELDS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN WHICH IRANIAN SCHOLARS COULD ENTER INTO COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS ON A BASIS OF EQUALITY WITH AMERICAN COLLEAGUES.

5. HOWEVER, UNDER THE STIMULUS OF DR SAMI'I, THE NEW MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION, DR PARSA IS LAYING PLANS FOR A MORE ACTIVE ROLE OF THE GOI IN THE SUPPORT OF S&T IN IRAN. A COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH WAS FORMED SOME YEARS AGO WITHIN THE MINISTRY AND PROVIDED WITH FUNDS TO SUPPORT WORTHWHILE PROJECTS SUBMITTED ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS. JUDGING OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSALS IS ACCOMPLISHED BY A BODY OF SOME 300 SCHOLARS, WHO ARE BELIEVED TO REPRESENT THE SCIENTIFIC ELITE OF IRAN. THEY ARE GROUPED INTO FIVE SECTIONS: MEDICINE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY, AGRICULTURE, HUMANITIES, AND (OTHER) SCIENCE. THESE SECTIONS HAVE NOW BEEN ASKED TO REVIEW THE STATE OF RESEARCH IN THEIR FIELDS AND TO REPORT ON AREAS OF WEAKNESS AS WELL AS AREAS OF STRENGTH. THESE REPORTS WILL THEN FORM THE BASIS OF A BETTER INFORMED AND ARTICULATED PROGRAM OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO PROMOTE RESEARCH FOR NATIONAL ENDS. AT THE SAME TIME, DR PARSA IS CONSIDERING INSTITUTIONAL FORMS AND MECHANISMS TO CARRY OUT THIS AND POSSIBLE OTHER PROGRAMS, TO STRENGTHEN IRANIAN S&T.

6. IN VIEW OF THE RESTRICTED RESEARCH ACTIVITY IN IRAN AND ITS GENERALLY ELEMENTARY LEVEL, IT WAS MUTUALLY AGREED THAT THE DRAFTING OF A BILATERAL AGREEMENT IN S&T, WHICH IMPLIES (1) CO-OPERATIVE RESEARCH BY PARTIES OF APPROXIMATELY EQUAL SCIENTIFIC SOPHISTICATION AND (2) MUTUAL BENEFIT, WOULD PROBABLY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE AT THIS TIME. NEVERTHELESS, DR BIRNBAUM PLEDGED THE NSF TO ASSIST THE GOI IN PUTTING IRANIAN SCIENTISTS IN TOUCH WITH APPROPRIATE COLLEAGUES IN THE UNITED STATES, IN PROVIDING AT GOI EXPENSE EXPERTS FOR SHORT PERIODS OF CONSULTATION, AND IN PUTTING TOGETHER WORKSHOPS AND SYMPOSIA AS SUGGESTED BY DR VICTOR RABINOWITCH OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (REFTEL B). AFTER THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION HAS COMPLETED ITS OWN STOCK-TAKING, HAS FORMULATED A COHERENT AND LOGICAL SCIENCE POLICY, AND HAS DEVELOPED SOME SORT OF EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE TO CARRY IT OUT, WE COULD THEN TAKE ANOTHER LOOK TO SEE WHERE POSSIBLE AREAS OF FERTILE S&T COLLABORATION MIGHT BE DEVELOPED. IN THE PRESENT STATE OF IRANIAN S&T IT IS LIKELY THAT A BILATERAL

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AGREEMENT WOULD RAISE EXPECTATIONS WHICH COULD NOT BE REALIZED AND WOULD HINDER BY UNNECESSARY RED TAPE USEFUL INTERACTION AT A LESS INSTITUTIONALIZED LEVEL. POLITICAL AS WELL AS SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES OF SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD BE PROBABLY SERVED AS A RESULT.

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